

Fate is So Beautiful

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Summary: Trowa reflects on the Fate that has brought him to Quatre...

1. Any Little Thing Could've...

> <meta name="ProgId"> "Fate is So Beautiful"

"Fate is So Beautiful"

Su Mon Han

*Note: I have not actually read the Episode Zero manga or seen Endless Waltz, and so may have some conflicts with some of the details of Trowa's past. Just consider this an artistic interpretation.

The desert sky at sunset was beautiful. A brilliant orange, to crimson, to violet, to blue. From the window of his guest bedroom at the Winner mansion, Trowa watched the brilliant orange sun slide behind a far-off line of mountains on the horizon, stretching the lonely blue shadows of a few solitary cacti scattered in the bleak landscape. It was very still. So still that the only thing that seemed to move was the sun, quietly dipping into oblivion.

_So stillâ€¦_Trowa thought, closing his eyes to burn the glorious image into his mind. _Nothing is still like thisâ€¦nothing is so peacefulâ€¦_

From somewhere, a soft strain of violin music melded into the stillness with its melancholy strains. The music was soothing. Trowa smiled.

"You may not act like it, but you feel it too," he murmured. "It's a loneliness that we share."

The music stopped abruptly. The stillness was broken by a flutter of quick, light footsteps. A moment later, Quatre's face peered shyly

into Trowa's room, through the open door.

"Trowa?" came the tentative murmur. "Oh, hi!" he gasped, a bit flustered to find Trowa's expectant gaze already on him.

Trowa smiled from his comfortable perch by the open window. "Hello."

"Uh, well, Iâ€" Quatre mumbled, suddenly speechless and a bit embarrassed by his eager entrance.

"That music was very beautiful," Trowa interjected smoothly. "What was it?"

"Oh, that!" Quatre said, looking relieved to find a way to ease into conversation. He stepped into the room, toting his beautifully polished violin and bow, and sat down beside Trowa on the floor. "That's what I came about. I just finished transcribing a song."

Trowa hummed a bit of the melody. "I like it," he said, "It sounds a little sad, but it suits me."

"I know, it is a little melancholy, but it's such a beautiful song," Quatre continued. "It's called 'Fate is So Beautiful.' Shall I play some for you?"

"I'd like that."

"All right."

Quatre shouldered his violin and played a deep, soulful note, followed by a series of quick, smooth strokes. He swayed a little with the melody. Trowa watched his peaceful face for a moment then closed his eyes and leaned back against the smooth, hard side of a bureau beside the window. A small breeze stirred the light silk curtains, making a gentle swish, swish sound that accompanied the violin. A cool, blue serenity filled the dusky room.

When the final note was played, Trowa opened his eyes and clapped.

"Beautiful," he said.

"Thank you." Quatre smiled.

"It sounds like it was a vocal," Trowa observed, the hauntingly beautiful melody still in his head.

"Yes, it is," Quatre agreed, pleased at his friend's perception. "An old Japanese one. The lyrics are very pretty. My favorite line is the lastâ€" 'Anata ga ireba.' It is repeated three times; even though it's such a simple line, 'As long as you're by my side,' I feel such a depth and significance in it."

"You really are a romantic," Trowa chuckled.

Quatre blushed. "Well, I love music and this is a song that I found had a profound impact on me. It makes me feel so much." After a paused, he asked, "Do you think that's silly?"

"Not at all," Trowa said. "I believe that music that is capable of moving people is one of the greatest treasures in the universe. A song is a short, simple thing. It doesn't have chapters and chapters to build up this depth and emotion like a novel has. That's why it's so hard to find those few, rare pieces that can leave you feeling afterward."

Quatre beamed and settled himself against the mahogany bedpost. After a thoughtful silence, he asked, "Do you believe in fate, Trowa?"

"Yes," Trowa answered, "I do." His gaze lifted up to the window and out at the sun, now a tiny sliver on the horizon. Waves of memories—faces, smells, light—washed over him. The familiar feeling of coldness called to him, as he fell backward into his memories. "I do—" A sea of memories—

At that time, if I had gone with them—or then—or then—or if they'd found me—if I'd been killed—if, if, if—"! What if I'd taken night duty then? Would I have met her? Would I have killed them? Would I be Trowa Barton, now? Would I be here—if? If, if, if! Would I—if?—

"Trowa!"

"Wha?" Trowa shook his head. Slowly, Quatre's pale, blue eyes, wide in alarm, came into focus.

"A-are you all right?" Quatre squeaked.

"I'm fine," Trowa mumbled. "I—" Catching the worried look in his friend's eyes, he flashed a small smile. "I'm fine, really," he said with more control. "I was just a million miles away—"

"What were you thinking about?" Quatre asked eagerly, his fears appeased.

"Oh, I don't know," Trowa said thoughtfully. "About the past—about fate— Things could have turned out completely differently, you know? At any time, any little thing could have changed the way things are now."

"You mean about OZ and the colonies?"

"No—" Trowa looked meaningfully at his companion. "I meant that I might not have been here now. Not here to look at this sunset, to hear your music, to—"

"To—" Quatre prompted.

"—to—" "talk with you now," Trowa concluded lamely.

"Oh."

"Yes," Trowa murmured, his gaze becoming distant again. "Any little thing might've—"

"Are you sure you don't wanna go down to the bar with us?" McConnal asked again.

"No thanks," Nanashi repeated.

Yes, this was the place to begin. Here, destiny had plucked him roughly from the steady flow of his mundane life and begun it again. Begun it as a man named Trowa Barton.

"Come on, even Gundam technicians are allowed a night on the town," Murasashi bantered.

"Wellâ€¦" Why not? The project was finally completed; it would be nice to have a change of scenery and some decent food tonight.
"Okâ€¦"

Something made him stop in mid-speech. Something stirred deep within him. Suddenly, something made him hesitate to leave just yet, something drew him back. Nanashi narrowed his eyes but kept his face bland.

"â€¦Thanks," Nanashi said slowly, waving them away, "but I'm tired. I'd rather just wrap this up then hit the sack."

"Aw, c'mon!"

"Not tonight."

"All right, then," Rinaldi said. "But when you hear about all the beautiful adventures we will have, baby, you will be sorry."

"Yeah, yeah," Nanashi grinned, waving the other mechanics off. For a moment, Nanashi watched the retreating figures, wondering what had compelled him to stay. He wasn't normally given to acting on impulses or emotions. No, that sort of behavior got you killed in his world. Better to think everything through, carefully, calculatngly.

The mechanics' rough laughter echoed through the vaulted, metallic halls of the construction warehouse. The resonance of their receding footsteps soon faded with them in the long, dark corridor leading to the main lab and reception area of LaGrange 3's Barton Cyberdisc Production Co..

"Cyberdisc, indeed," Nanashi snorted, sorting through the piles of loose paper astrew on his desk. "A place this size to manufacture microdisks? The Alliance must be thick."

He sat down in his grimy, hand-me-down office chair and solemnly decided not to budge until he finished filling out the clearance forms for the Gundam.

The Gundam. Gundam Heavyarms had just been completed this morning. Tomorrow, it would be shipped to a training range out in the L3 scrap wilderness to be tested. And, therefore, Nanashi sighed, it would be reasonable to get the release clearance forms finished before then.

He looked up affectionately at the massive mobile suit. Beside it,

his tiny, open-air cubicle, in a dark corner of the warehouse seemed pathetically puny.

It's better than nothing, Nanashi thought. _It's better than beforeâ€¦_ Yes, the fabulous Barton Foundation could afford even to give mechanics their own little office space. Well, one had to keep one's computer around somewhere if one was to ensure the perfectly aerodynamic design of the Heavyarms. His glance was drawn again to the titanic suit, resting in the still darkness of the empty warehouse. Massive. Expensive. Destructive. Never had a Gundam been built with as much destructive power as the Gundam Heavyarms. Loaded to the tee with weapons and missiles of every sort. The kind of machine a true soldier would be happy to pilot. A soldier like Nanashiâ€¦ but, no, Heavyarms was not for him. It was for fabulously wealthy and spoiled Trowa Barton. Nanashi made a face. Trowa Barton was one of his least favorite people in the colony. He was loud, arrogant, and reckless; all the worst traits a soldier could have, in Nanashi's opinion. But enough about all that, he was merely a mechanic here, employed to construct rather than destroy. _â€¦to constructâ€¦rather thanâ€¦destroyâ€¦_

All the construction men and other mechanics had gone. There was not a sound to be heard. That was the way Nanashi liked it. But just as he had begun to settle into the dull routine of bubbling in the scantron circles on the forms, he heard voices coming from behind the Gundam. _Funny, I thought everyone left early_.

The voices, though indistinguishable to Nanashi, drew his attention time and again.

None of my business, Nanashi thought, trying to concentrate on penciling in bubbles. He glared at the dulling point of his pencil. It was just a few loiterers, that was all; nothing at all unusual. But Nanashi simply could not suppress the urging he felt inside. For the second time in a half hour, he gave in to the compelling feeling. _You must be slipping into your dotage_, he told himself. _This is stupid_. But the irresistible attraction urged him on. Stepping silently from his desk, he approached the direction of the ruckus.

As he got closer, Nanashi could hear the voices were quarrelling. One of them sounded familiarâ€¦

"Listen, old man, those Earth Federation tyrants are going down! Hn, struttin' around like they're the only ones that matter in this universe~! With this Gundam, I'm gonna give'em just what they deserve."

Trowa Barton. Nanashi shrank back behind the Gundam, out of sight. He was _not_ in the mood to have Barton picking on him now. Who was that old man he was arguing with? He was a professor that worked here, or something. Nanashi watched the old professor and another young man, his assistant, probably, glare at Trowa.

"The colonies want peace, not a bloodbath!" the old man yelled back at Trowa. "You yourself have just admitted that the residents of Earth are not better, and therefore, no different than us. So why annihilate innocent people?!"

"Step aside, old man!" Trowa snarled. "A revolution isn't going to be

made by the likes of you and your weak generation. If you old fools hadn't let Heero Yuy be assassinated in the first place, none of this would ever have happened! It's time the new generation stepped in and did things the right wayâ€”through massive retaliation!"

And with that, Trowa tried to shove his way past the old man.

"Wait!" the old man cried, leaping in front of Trowa. "I won't allow my creation to be abused like this! You will not pilot this Gundam!"

"Old man," Trowa growled quietly, dangerously, "I am going to report you to my father and _see_ to it that fossils like you are put in their place!"

"No wait!" the old man cried. "You must understand--!"

The old man's desperation hung in the air. Trowa turned on his heel and began stalking in Nanashi's direction. _Oh no,_ Nanashi thought. _Here he comes._ As he was about to sneak away, the other man spoke up for the first time.

"You must listen to Dr. S!" he cried. "We who have given our lives to the production of this Gundam have sacrificed in order to have peace and equality between Earth and the colonies. You can't just step all over our dream!"

"Buzz off, or I'll have you taken care of too!" Trowa snarled. He turned and began stalking away.

"Wait!" Dr. S cried.

"Stop! Stop now!" the assistant cried, his eyes wild and panicky. In one swift movement, he drew a pistol from an inside pocket of his lab coat and fired twice at Trowa. "Stop!"

With a grunt and a spray of blood, Trowa fell forward, just at Nanashi's feet. Nanashi jumped back, out of reach of the dead mans grasping, bloody arms.

"Who's there?!" Dr. S demanded.

"I-is he dead?" the assistant asked shakily.

"Point blank range," Nanashi replied flatly. "He's dead."

With a gasping moan, the assistant's trembling knees gave way and he collapsed to the floor in a shaking huddle.

"Who are you?" Dr. S said sharply.

"No one," Nanashi replied. "I have no name. It's rather inconvenient sometimes."

Dr. S narrowed his eyes suspiciously. "Do you work here?"

"Yes. I am a mechanic."

"And you say you don't have a name?"

"Yes. But I will take on the name of this dead man's and carry out whatever mission he was supposed to."

"You?"

"I am a soldier. I have been for a long time."

"Really? Will you follow my orders and carry out the mission as I instruct?"

Nanashi nodded. "Yes. Orders are to be followed."

"How interestingâ€¦|Then you'll do it?"

"Yes," said Trowa Barton. "I rather like this machine."

2. Heavyarms

> <meta name="ProgId"> "Fate is So Beautiful"

"Fate is So Beautiful"

Su Mon Han

"C'mon, Barton, is that the best you've got?"

Trowa narrowed his eyes and gripped the manual consoles of the Heavyarms. The cockpit of the massive Gundam was becoming swelteringly unbearable. The lack of greenery and irrigation caused an intensely arid climate at the Gundam test site hidden deep within the scrap wilderness of the L3 colony.

Sweat trickled down his temples and bare arms. Trowa had known from the beginning that piloting a mobile suit as massive as the Heavyarms would be a difficult and demanding task; but faced with living the reality of the Heavyarms tests and training was a different matter. However, a true soldier did not give in to fatigue; 98 degree weather and the strain of tons of Gundanium on his arms gave no excuse for failure.

"So, Barton, are you through?"

Trowa closed his eyes and steadied his breath, shoving the flicker of annoyance from the arrogant challenge out of his mind. His eyes opened and locked themselves into their usual emotionless olive stare. Without warning, Trowa took off, his fingers flying through a quick succession of punches and flicks of the wrist to unleash an utterly deadly torrential hail of missiles and bullets at the unsuspecting test targets. When the dust cleared from the series of explosions, the entire dummy squadron was nowhere to be seen.

"Holy _shit!_" the test coordinator hissed into the intercom.
"Th-they're gone!"

"Obliterated in a single blow," observed the voice of Dr. S, also through the intercom in Trowa's cockpit. "Impressive. It _was_ my aim in designing Heavyarms to be the ultimate, frontal-assault weapon, capable of devastating an entire squadron or command center alone."

Dr. S's eyes gleamed. _It seems I have found a pilot who can realize the potential of my masterpiece._

Aloud, he said, "Trowa, you've mastered the stationary offensive of the Heavyarms. Let's see what you can do in a mobile, short-range assault. The Heavyarms' main means of attack is by projectile, but it has a last-line weapon that can be used in short-range combat."

In response, Trowa activated the wristblade on his Gundam's right arm.

"Exactly!" came Dr. S's delighted reply.

"We're sending in some dummy targets for short-range combat!" the test coordinator announced.

"Good," Dr. S said. "Now, let's see how quickly he can maneuver that thing."

The Heavyarms is built like a fortress, Trowa thought. He calmly analyzed the approach of the new dummy targets. On the side-screen panels of the Heavyarms cockpit, diagrams pointing out potential dangers and weak points of his opponents appeared onscreen. A flashing red signal on the left sides of the targets on the diagram beeped insistently the whereabouts of the best angle of attack.

"Just what I was thinking," Trowa grinned. Yes, he certainly was getting to like this machine.

As the targets came into range and produced their thermal weapons, Trowa charged forward in Heavyarms, bladed arm held back in preparation for the discharge. Upon meeting his first opponent, Trowa sprang the blade forward, in at an angle and out, cutting cleanly through the torso of the dummy suit.

"Damn, he's fast!" the test coordinator gasped, personally controlling the movements of the dummy suits.

"Yes, he seems to be able to appreciate and utilize the strengths and weaknesses of the Gundam." Dr. S stroked his chin thoughtfully. "Make the next attacks from above," he muttered to the test coordinator.

"Sir!" he acknowledged, grinning in anticipation.

On the field, the second dummy target leapt high into the air, supplemented by the rocket boosters on its feet, and lifted its beam sword to slice down on Heavyarms. At the last minute, the massive Gundam whirled around with surprising grace and control. Using the momentum of the turn, Trowa swung the right arm up, allowing his blade to slice effortlessly through the attacking target.

"Another!" Trowa gasped to himself, noting another airborne target behind him. He followed through on the momentum of the spin to turn him another 180 degrees, meeting the leaping attack of a third test target. His blade connected full with its head and sent it flying and crashing into the sheer cliff wall that ascended to Trowa's right. At the same moment, a fourth test target attacked. Trowa whirled to face it and dispatched his attacker with a quick double-slash across the

suit's torso and through its knee-joints. The suit crumbled to the floor.

Trowa grinned. _Not bad for this hulking suit,_ he thought. As he raised his right hand to wipe the sweat from his brow, he felt that pull within him again. For no reason whatsoever, he quirked his left hand, still gripping the manual console, to the left, simultaneously turning the Heavyarms and firing off a missile towards the cliff wall.

"Why theâ€" Trowa cut off, staring as the missile intercepted a massive slab of stoneâ€"probably dislodged when he had thrown the third test target at the cliffâ€" that was a second from squashing him and his Gundam flat. The boulder shattered into harmless bits of rubble about seven feet from Heavyarms' head.

"Oh my Godâ€|" Trowa breathed, unable to suppress the shaking of his hands as he watched the boulder's remnants crash into the ground around him. Miraculously, none of the smaller pieces, even, had hit the Heavyarms.

"Confound it all!" Dr. S's voice wailed over the intercom. "Trowa! What happened? Have you sustained any damage?"

"No," Trowa murmured, still somewhat awestruck. "Heavyarms is completely untouched."

"What?! Really?" Dr. S cried. "I was sure that landslide would have my Heavyarms in the repair shop for weeks!"

"No," Trowa repeated, regaining control of himself. "The Heavyarms has sustained no damages."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes."

There was a pause. "All right, then." Dr. S's voice was decisive. "Return to base. That's enough for today."

"Roger." Trowa's reply was as controlled and unaffected as always. But in the cockpit, his left hand shook again. _What in heaven made me fire off a missile just then?_ _How did I know it was coming?_ Trowa allowed his gaze to ascend the cliff wall as he considered what had just happened. The rock had been dislodged from high above, but the angle of the artificial sunlight glared him in the face, rendering him unable to see even the shadow of the falling boulder. So what had caused him to fire? How had he known? Trowa took a long, shuddering breath. â€|_Had_ he even known?

"Hey, Barton!"

Dismounting, still a bit shakily, Trowa straightened to see the test coordinator hurrying toward him.

"That was really something!" the man gasped, eyes admiring. "I'll admit, when I first saw ya, I thought to meself 'that _kid_ is gonna pilot the Gundam? There's just no way he can handle it!' But ya know,

I pride meself for bein' flexible like thisâ€"I know when I'm wrong and I gotta say, I'll embrace ya wholeheartedly if ya can bring peace and freedom to the colonies!"

Trowa watched the impressive display passively. He really didn't feel like socializing at the moment. Time and again, his thoughts were drawn back to the strange urge that had caused him to fire randomly, coincidentally saving his life! As someone who had seen the pits of life, Trowa did not believe in such romantic impracticalities as fate or luck. He had no disillusion. A person had his skill, intelligence, and calculations; that was all he could depend on for survival. No one was watching and intervening. Luck was merely a coincidental favor of conditionsâ€"but Trowa knew that a successful person created his own luck, chose wisely enough to act at times _when_ conditions were favorable. That was just the way it was.

"â€|Barton? You listenin' to me?"

"Yes, of course," Trowa replied automatically, even though he hadn't heard a word the man had said.

"Aah, a person can only be so serious!" the coordinator snorted. "All right then, you're probably tired anyway. See you at mess." With that, the burly officer strutted off.

Trowa followed him with unseeing eyes. What had he said anyway? Trowa had been around soldiers all his life and understood that men came in many different types and, unfortunately, there were always those who could never get enough of their own voices. _The _last_ thing a soldier needs is to drop his guard in camaraderie,_ he thought. That was foolish. Besides, who said they could be trusted just because they fought by your side in battle? You were nothing to them really. Nothing at allâ€|

Trowa shuddered inwardly. What was the point of thinking about the past? There were issues now, in the present, that he should be concentrating on. He slowly made his way down the corridors toward the barracks. An hour until dinner. It would be best to shower and rest a little. Now, more than ever, it was important to keep in top condition. Trowa, outwardly as unaffected as ever, felt the stirrings of anticipation deep within him. This new assignment was going to be different from the small-scale missions he had taken on in his mercenary days; this was something that would change everything forever. _Even meâ€|_ murmured something deep in the back of Trowa's mind. _Even me._

End
file.